

## Breeding Bird Atlas Begun

The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources initiated a breeding bird atlas for Ohio in 1982. The atlas will attempt to determine the distribution of breeding birds throughout the state. It will employ methods currently utilized by other eastern states for their breeding bird atlases. It is hoped that the entire state can be censused within a five year period.

Atlasing is a method of recording the occurrence of individual species of plants or animals within a series of uniform geographic units or blocks. It began in 1860 by European botanists and was first used for breeding birds by the British in 1968. Their efforts resulted in the publication of the Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britian and Ireland (1976). In 1971, a European atlas committee was formed to coordinate all of the various atlas projects in the European countries. Chandler Robbins used the same standards for Montgomery County, Maryland, which was the first atlasing project in the United States. Since then, both Massachusetts and Vermont have successfully completed their five year atlas projects. Now at least ten more atlas projects are under way in North America. (See American Birds, Volume 36, No. 1, January, 1982.)

The basis of the Ohio atlas project, like most of the eastern states, is a grid system based on the 7.5 minute series topographic maps published by the United States Department of Interior Geological Survey. There are 806 such 7.5 minute series topographic maps for Ohio, each of which is referred to as a quadrangle. The Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves has divided each of these 806 maps (quadrangles) into six blocks of equal size. Each block then encompasses about 10 square miles. Then one of the six blocks in each of the 806 maps was randomly selected as the primary block for censusing.

During the winter and spring of 1982, some Ohio birders were contacted by the Division and asked to do a field survey in certain blocks as a pilot project for the first year of the survey. The object of the field survey was to record and confirm every species breeding within the block.

The field surveyor received from the Division a topographic map of the quadrangle which had been marked with the boundaries of the block to be surveyed. He also received an instruction manual and a talley card upon which to record and submit the results of his survey. The surveyor was asked to spend at least 16 to 20 hours in June or early July in his block recording the breeding status of birds encountered. The instruction manual gave breeding codes to be used in reporting the breeding status of each species. The three main codes were possible, probable, and confirmed breeding. Certain criteria to be followed for each of these codes was given in the instruction manual. Each surveyor was urged to attempt to confirm the breeding for each species found. Once a species was confirmed for a block, that confirmed it for the five year survey period.

I was assigned a block which included downtown Barberton, Ohio. Most of the area was metropolitan and residential but there were a few areas which contained small ponds, old fields and small wood lots. I worked alone and made 12 trips into the area of two hours each from June 22, 1982, through July 13, 1982. I would drive to the area, which is about five miles away, each morning at 6:00 A.M. I systematically covered every area within the 10 square mile block by driving through residential areas and walking the rural areas. In retrospect, it would have been more efficient to have birded the block by habitat as was recommended by the instruction manual. Each trip ended at 8:30 A.M. when I quit the survey and went to work. I felt a little tired at work but invigorated by the outdoor activity

and by the fact that I was directly involved as an outdoor witness to summer bird life. The survey work brought me a lot of enjoyment. I found the exploration of new areas and the discovery of new species within the block exciting. The breeding criteria codes required observation of bird behavior. I enjoyed looking for this. Even the "common" species gave me increased enjoyment in this regard. I was no longer simply looking at birds, but really observing their behavior for clues as to whether or not they were breeding. I was surprised at the species in my own "backyard." I found a total of 67 species of which I was able to confirm 23 breeding. The common gallinule, yellow-breasted chat and purple finch were the biggest surprises. I also found a horned lark with young in a field at the Babcock-Wilcox plant and a ringed turtle-dove which must have been escaped since I'm told no wild population of this bird exists in the United States. This summer I hope to spend some additional time in this area to increase the number of species present and the confirm at least one-half of this number as breeders.

In 1983, most of the administration of the survey work will be handled by area coordinators. If you would like to volunteer for 16 to 20 hours of field work, just contact your area coordinator. I can't think of a more worthwhile effort for your own education and enjoyment and for the development of breeding bird records for the state. Your work will be done during a time (late June-early July) when migration birding is the slowest and bird behavior is the most interesting. If you don't know of your area coordinator, contact a project coordinator:

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The end product of this effort will be a breeding map of the state. In addition to the increase in knowledge of breeding range and species present, it will provide some current base of information for future years. Additionally, plastic overlays on these maps for factors such as habitat, weather, geographical features may explain breeding patterns of certain birds.

#### Notice

The publication of this joint summer issue represents our commitment to continue this magazine regardless. My thanks to all of the subscribers each of whom continue to support this magazine. I believe you continue your support because the magazine offers you something you can't find elsewhere: detailed interesting information on Ohio birds. It's a needed resource. We will continue with joint issues until we are back on schedule so there won't be any gaps in our records. My special thanks to Marjorie Thomas and Paula Jack for their faith in continued publication. To all of you: thanks and keep your support with a good word, it's working.